

# The Surgeon General's Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation Fact Sheet

Today's epidemic of overweight and obesity threatens the historic progress we have made in increasing American's quality and years of healthy life. The hard facts:

- Two-thirds of adults and nearly one in three children are overweight or obese.
- 70% of American Indian/Alaskan Native adults are overweight or obese.
- The prevalence of obesity in the U.S. more than doubled (from 15% to 34%) among adults and more than tripled (from 5% to 17%) among children and adolescents from 1980 to 2008.
- An obese teenager has over a 70% greater risk of becoming an obese adult.
- Obesity is more common among non-Hispanic black teenagers (29%) than Hispanic teenagers (17.5%) or non-Hispanic white teenagers (14.5%).

To stop the obesity epidemic in this country, we must remember that Americans will be more likely to change their behavior if they have a meaningful reward- something more than just reaching a certain weight or dress size. The real reward has to be something that people can feel and enjoy and celebrate. That reward is invigorating, energizing, joyous health. It is a level of health that allows people to embrace each day and live their lives to the fullest – without disease, disability, or lost productivity. To be a nation that is Healthy and Fit.

Key actions outlined in *The Surgeon General's Vision for a Healthy and Fit Nation* include:

**Individual Healthy Choices and Healthy Home Environments** - Change starts with the individual choices Americans make each day for themselves, their families and those around them. To help achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle, Americans of all ages should: reduce consumption of sodas and juices with added sugars; eat more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins; drink more water and choose low-fat or non-fat dairy products; limit television time to no more than 2 hours per day; and be more physically active.

**Creating Healthy Child Care Settings** - It is estimated that over 12 million children ages 0–6 years receive some form of child care on a regular basis from someone other than their parents. Child care programs should identify and implement approaches that reflect expert recommendations on physical activity, screen time limitations, good nutrition, and healthy sleep practices. Parents should talk with their child care providers about changes to promote their children's health.

**Creating Healthy Schools** - Each school day provides multiple opportunities for students to learn about health and practice healthy behaviors such as regular physical activity and good nutrition. To help students develop life-long healthy habits, schools should provide appealing healthy food options including fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, water and low-fat or non-fat beverages. School systems should also require daily physical education for students

allowing 150 minutes per week for elementary schools and 225 minutes per week for secondary schools.

**Creating Healthy Work Sites** - The majority of the 140 million men and women who are employed in the United States spend a significant amount of time each week at their work site. Because obesity reduces worker productivity and increases health care costs, employers are becoming more aware of the need to help promote health within the workplace. Employers can implement wellness programs that promote healthy eating in cafeterias, encourage physical activity through group classes and stairwell programs and create incentives for employees to participate.

**Mobilizing the Medical Community** - Doctors and other health care providers are often the most trusted source of health information and are powerful role models for healthy lifestyle habits. Medical care providers must make it a priority to teach their patients about the importance of good health. When discussing patients' Body Mass Index (BMI), providers should explain the connection between BMI and increased risk for disease and, when appropriate, refer patients to resources that will help them meet their physical, nutritional, and psychological needs.

**Improving Our Communities** - Americans need to live and work in environments that help them practice healthy behaviors. Neighborhoods and communities should become actively involved in creating healthier environments. Communities should consider the geographic availability of their supermarkets, improving residents' access to outdoor recreational facilities, limiting advertisements of less healthy foods and beverages, building and enhancing infrastructures to support more walking and bicycling, and improving the safety of neighborhoods to facilitate outdoor physical activity.